

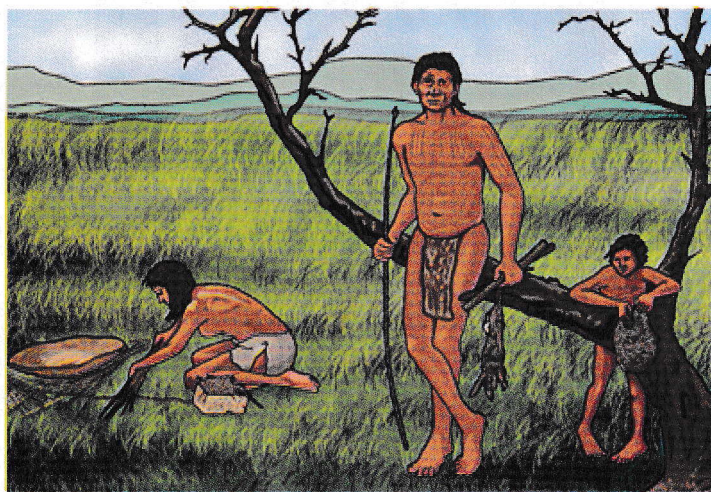
## Neolithic Age

The Neolithic Age stretched from 8,000 BCE to about 3,000 BCE. In some places, however, Neolithic culture continued until 1,000 BCE. During this period, human life progressed and changed significantly as people settled down at one place.

### Beginning of Farming

Several varieties of grain-bearing grasses, including wheat, barley and rice grew naturally in different parts of the world. People who gathered wild grain for food observed that when seeds fell on the soil, they grew into new plants and produced many more seeds. With this knowledge, they gradually realised that they could grow their own food. Thus, they began to cultivate cereals such as rice, wheat, barley and also pulses, legumes, vegetables and fruits. This marked the beginning of what we call the Neolithic Age.

People became food producers or farmers in the **New Stone Age** or Neolithic period. This phase of human life is also known as the **Neolithic Revolution** because of the far-reaching changes and developments that took place.



◆ an illustration depicting the practice of farming by early humans

### Domestication of Plants and Animals

Climatic changes encouraged the growth of grasslands and led to an increase in the number of herd animals such as sheep, cattle and goats.

Gradually, people who hunted these animals started following them and discovered their behavioural traits and breeding habits. Thus began the practice of domestication of animals. These domesticated animals provided meat, milk and dairy products and their skin could be used to make clothes.

### Leading a Settled Life

The beginning of agriculture affected human life in many ways. Once people started cultivation, they settled down in one place as they had to look after the plants.

### Houses

The houses that the Neolithic people built were made of mud, straw, and reed. In some places, they lived in **dwelling pits**. For example, in Burzahon in Kashmir, people built pit houses, which were dug into the ground, with steps leading into them.



◆ a dwelling pit

Many families began to live together for mutual cooperation and better protection. Such habitation sites came to be called villages, which could be near river or lakes.

### Invention of the Wheel

The invention of the wheel was a very important achievement of the Neolithic people, and therefore of humankind. However, no one knows how the idea of the wheel occurred to early humans.

Early humans must have observed that a block was difficult to move than a cylindrical one. A